

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PHNOM 17212 271305Z

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8727

C O N F I D E N T I A L PHNOM PENH 17212

EXDIS

E.O. 11652:GDS

TAGS: PINT,CB

SUBJECT: LONG BORET AND SOSTHENE FERNANDEZ BURY HATCHET

1. ON DECEMBER 27 I HELD INTIMATE LUNCHEON FOR PRIME MINISTER LONG BORET AND FANK COMMANDER IN CHIEF LTG SOSTHENE FERNANDEZ, IN AN EFFORT TO BRING THEM TO A PLEDGE TO WORK TOGETHER OVER THE NEXT FEW MONTHS.

2. ALTHOUGH THE TWO MEN HAD BEEN FRIENDS FOR SOME YEARS, AN INCIDENT OF A PERSONAL NATURE, WHICH AROSE SHORTLY BEFORE LONG BORET'S LAST TRIP TO THE UN THIS FALL, CAUSED A BREACH WHICH TURNED OUT TO BE EVEN DEEPER THAN I HAD REALIZED. THIS WAS ESPECIALLY TRUE ON THE SIDE OF THE PRIME MINISTER, WHO HAD FELT HIMSELF DEEPLY INSULTED BY SOSTHENE. TODAY, IN AN OCCASIONALLY EMOTIONAL THREE-HOUR SESSION, THERE WAS A CHANCE FOR BOTH TO GET IT OUT OF THEIR SYSTEM: LONG BORET TO MAKE CLEAR TO SOSTHENE HOW DEEP HAD BEEN THE WOUND, AND SOSTHENE TO EXPRESS HIS SURPRISE AND HIS BELIEF THAT THE MISUNDERSTANDING HAD BEEN CLEARED UP LONG AGO AS A RESULT OF HIS PUBLIC AND PRIVATE APOLOGIES, AND EFFECTIVELY FORGOTTEN.

3. I SAID THAT I BELIEVED 1975 WOULD BE THE CRITICAL YEAR FOR NEGOTIATIONS, THAT THESE TWO REPRESENTED THE TWO INSTITUTIONS WHICH COUNTED IN THE COUNTRY (GOVERNMENT AND ARMED FORCES), THAT IF THEY WORK TOGETHER IN A SPIRIT OF TRUST AND COOPERATION, NO OTHER FORCE CAN
CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 PHNOM 17212 271305Z

STAND AGAINST THEM--AND NEITHER WOULD NEED TO SEEK THE

SUPPORT OF ANY OTHER ELEMENT (ALTHOUGH LON NON'S NAME WAS NOT MENTIONED IN THIS CONTEXT,THE MEANING WAS CLEAR).

4. I BELIEVE THE MEETING RESULTED IN REAL PROGRESS, WITH EACH UNDERSTANDING BETTER THE POSITIONS AND HANGUPS OF THE OTHER, SUCH AS SOSTHENE'S PERSONAL STRONG BIAS AGAINST THIS PARTICULAR NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. SOSTHENE PROMISED THE PRIME MINISTER HIS COMPLETE PERSONAL SUPPORT, INCLUDING SOME FORM OF PUBLIC GESTURE OF SUCH SUPPORT IN ORDER TO SILENCE LOCAL RUMOR MILLS. IT WAS ALSO AGREED THAT PRIME MINISTER WOULD RECEIVE A WEEKLY CLASSIFIED BRIEFING ON MILITARY SITUATION, IN MANY DETAILS OF WHICH HE IS SURPRISINGLY INNOCENT.

5. SOSTHENE, IN BREAKFAST MEETING A DAY OR SO AGO WITH NEW ACTING DEFENSE MINISTER HOU HONG,HAD INDICATED HIS AGREEMENT THAT BUDGETARY CONTROL ON MILITARY SIDE SHOULD BE EXERCISED WITHIN AND BY MINISTRY OF DEFENSE, WHICH HAD BEEN IMPOSSIBLE UNDER THE CORRUPT AND WEAK THAPPANA NGINN. LONG BORET WAS PLEASED WITH THIS,AND I MADE SUGGESTION THAT THE CIVILIAN DEFENSE MINISTER HAVE ONE OR TWO MILITARY DEPUTIES WHO WOULD HAVE CONFIDENCE OF BOTH SOSTHENE AND THE MINISTER (AND BY EXTENSION OF PRIME MINISTER).

6. THE TWO MEN PARTED WITH WARM HANDSHAKE AND AFTER PRIME MINISTER HAD OFFERED TO CONSULT WITH CINC FANK ON CABINET COMPOSITION AND PROGRAM BEFORE PRESENTING HIMSELF BEFORE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. AT THIS MEETING LONG BORET ALSO INDICATED TO SOSTHENE THAT (A) HE WOULD NOT BROADEN CABINET BY INCLUSION OF REPUBLICAN MINISTERS BECAUSE OF THEIR REFUSAL TO DEFEND THEIR MINISTERIES BEFORE ASSEMBLY, (B) MINISTERIAL RESHUFFLE WOULD BE MINIMAL, (C) EMPHASIS WOULD BE ON AUSTERITY PROGRAM INCLUDING NEW TAXES, RETIREMENT OF GENERALS, ETC. AND THAT SOME ACTIONS WOULD BE TAKEN BEFORE LONG BORET APPEARED BEFORE ASSEMBLY IN ORDER ENHANCE CREDIBILITY OF HIS PROGRAM.

7. COMMENT: BRINGING THESE TWO MEN TOGETHER IS BEST
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 PHNOM 17212 271305Z

WAY TO NEUTRALIZE LON NON FOR TIME BEING.
DEAN

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